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SOLIDARITY WITH GAZA



ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

The Whole System is Rotten

We oppose capitalism's focus on profit before people and the environment. Capitalism does not serve the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

- **Ensure jobs and a living wage for all.**
- **Defend wages:** unions should demand cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) clauses in all new and existing contracts.
- **Put planet before profit:** fight climate change with a green jobs program.
- **Take the market out of housing:** a mass program to build and renovate decent, safe and affordable public housing run by tenants' democracy.
- **Fight for health, education and services:** seize tax havens and drastically increase taxes on the rich and big corporations, to fully fund public services.
- **For fighting, democratic unions:** run by and for the members to campaign for better pay and working conditions.
- **Respect and enforce existing Indigenous treaty and resource rights.**
- **Take into public ownership key sectors of the economy:** including banking, the internet, the energy industry, transportation and privately-owned utilities.

Join **Socialist Alternative** to help create a future free of exploitation and oppression, where people and the planet flourish. ★



INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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If you agree with the ideas in this magazine, join **Socialist Alternative!**

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Socialist Alternative in Action *Ray Goerke*

Since October, Socialist Alternative members have joined thousands in solidarity with the Palestinian people at rallies in Vancouver, Victoria, Coquitlam, North Vancouver, Surrey, Saskatoon, and Toronto. We spoke to many young people for whom Israel's brutal assault on Gaza has provoked intense feelings of horror and anger.

Our program highlights the need for international working-class solidarity in the struggle against Israeli capitalism, its ongoing occupation of Palestinian lands, its genocidal war, and the explicit support of imperialist powers. We call on workers and the labour movement in Canada to build a campaign to end Canada's shipment of weapons to Israel (more p 8).

By speaking to regular working-class people about what is needed to end the slaughter in Gaza, we've raised over \$2,500 for our comrades in Socialist Struggle Movement, our sister organization in Israel-Palestine. They are on the ground building an anti-war movement in Israel, where they face extreme pressures, including intense state repression.

In addition to Gaza solidarity, we attended the Frack Free BC rally in Victoria in November. The BC NDP is cynically supporting Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as a "clean" fossil fuel alternative, despite growing evidence that it is nothing of the sort. We spoke to people about the need to halt all new fossil fuel production and for a transition to a green economy. Using our *Climate Struggle is Class Struggle* petition, we explained the important role that the working class needs to play in taking control of industry, and the need to guarantee well-paying secure jobs to all workers.

Join Socialist Alternative or Socialist Alternative Youth in your area and take action to fight for a socialist future! ★



Socialist Alternative at the Frack Free BC rally in November

The First Intifada

Ang Berlinic, Grace Bodie and Violet Forrie

The first Intifada was sparked on December 8, 1987, when an Israeli army vehicle crashed into a civilian car killing four Palestinian labourers in the West Bank. Leading up to this, tensions had been bubbling under the Israeli regime's brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since the 1967 war.

Since the creation of Israel in 1948, when 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes in the *Nakba*, Palestinians faced constant oppression. Under military occupation, they faced regular violent assaults (*mowing the lawn*), had their civil rights violated, and did not control the economy or infrastructure. Over the years, Israeli settlements increased, forcing Palestinians out of the homes and lands that their families had lived on for generations.

Intifada Errupts

This act of violence in 1987 caused an eruption in Palestinian society known as the first Intifada, which means in Arabic *a shaking off*. It began throughout the refugee camp Jabalya in Gaza and rapidly spread across the West Bank, even reaching parts of Jordan and Lebanon. Although the uprisings were overwhelmingly non-violent demonstrations and strikes, the Israeli regime unleashed violent attacks on unarmed Palestinians, murdering over 1,300 and wounding 120,000. Over 600,000 were imprisoned over the six-year Intifada.

A mass strike was declared, organized by workers and unions; businesses were shut down and boycotted; people stopped paying taxes; and there was a refusal to purchase Israeli goods. Grassroots committees formed to take back Palestinian society, taking over from Israel and the official leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which had grown disconnected from the needs of ordinary Palestinians. Women and especially youth were at the forefront of these committees, organizing education, healthcare, food, neighbourhood watch committees and more. As in all mass movements, young people were and are at the forefront of struggle.

Many young workers travelled daily to work inside Israel and therefore the Israeli economy was dependent on these many travelling workers, as all capitalist nations are dependent on the exploitation of their workers.

The grassroots nature of the uprising made it extremely difficult to repress, and the mass strikes nearly brought the Israeli economy to its knees, motivating Israel to seek a peace agreement. Without workers, capitalist nations cannot exist.



Youth in the first Intifada

The Intifada was halted, as a secret agreement was negotiated known as the Oslo Accords, in 1993. This deal was brokered by the US between Israel and the PLO, who had returned from exile. The negotiations excluded all ordinary Palestinian voices that had taken action during the Intifada, completely stifling what the Palestinians had been fighting for — freedom from the oppressive Israeli occupation and for better living standards. The Accords did not end the Israeli regime's oppression and has not improved the lives of Palestinians.

For Workers' Solidarity with Gaza

Now, as horror mounts at the slaughter in Gaza, voices of solidarity with Palestinians are heard strongly around the globe. This movement is drawing in young people who are ready to be part of the struggle against Israel's imperialist and genocidal project, backed primarily by the US. It is important to recognize the tools available to us inside the imperialist core and to Palestinians. Just like the youth of the first Intifada, we have the power to withdraw our labour and cooperation in an organized movement of mass strikes and boycotts against businesses and so-called Canada, which funds Israel. We can call on unions to help halt the Israeli war machine by stopping shipments of weapons to Israel.

An organized movement, capable of sustaining itself through a powerful sense of unity, can link young people in Canada and internationally to fight against capitalism, occupation, oppression, poverty and war. We can connect our struggle in Canada with the Palestinians, Israelis and others who are standing up against the Israeli war machine. The first Intifada showed Palestinians' commitment to the fight for liberation. We are inspired by their energy and endless spirit. In solidarity we will build a movement to change the world. ★

Follow us on Instagram: [SocialistAlternativeYouth](#)

Ontario: Life Getting Harder

Ontario Socialist Alternative

In spite of multiple blunders, retreats and missteps, Doug Ford is still sitting comfortably as Ontario's Premier. He seems to be immune to the Greenbelt scandal and possible criminal investigations, his humiliating retreat in 2022 from his attack on unions, the soaring cost of living, and crises in health and housing. Or maybe he is sitting comfortably because neither the Liberals nor NDP — both with new leaders — are providing a convincing alternative.

New Leaders

When Bonnie Crombie, Mississauga's former Mayor, campaigned to lead the Liberals, she claimed they had shifted too far to the left trying to win NDP support. She stated that she would move the party to the centre-right, which she called the "secret sauce" to winning elections. This must be music to Doug Ford's ears, given that he has successfully occupied the centre-right for years. Any attempt to eat into Ford's populist base by offering more of the same will be doomed.

Marit Stiles became the NDP's new leader a year ago — without any opposition — after over a decade with Andrea Horwath at the helm.

While Liberal and Conservative politicians predictably came out in support of Israel over the assault on Gaza, the Ontario NDP floundered. The party called for a ceasefire, yet targeted pro-Palestinian voices within their party, as shown by the ejection of MPP Sarah Jama from caucus when she called for ending the "occupation of Palestinian land."

Toronto and Ford-Chow relations

Toronto residents, in Canada's richest city, continue to suffer. One in ten rely on food banks, twice as many as last year. The property tax is set to increase by 9.5 percent this year, the highest in modern Toronto history. One in five households in purpose-built rental buildings fell behind on their housing bills last year.

Yet the dominant news is the cozy relations between Premier Ford and Mayor Olivia Chow. What a change in a year! During Toronto's 2023 mayoral election, Ford made it clear that he did not want "lefty" Chow to be the next mayor, after her 14 years as a left-leaning city councillor and eight years as a New Democrat MP. "If Olivia Chow gets in, it'll be an unmitigated disaster," he said. "Businesses are terrified. Therefore, the workers should be terrified."

However, within a few months of Chow's election they had a love-in. They announced provincial support to Toronto worth around \$1.2 billion in operating funding over three years, with billions in "capital relief" by the province taking



Ford and Chow are friends now after reaching a new funding deal

responsibility for the city's two major expressways. The agreement would "unlock" billions of dollars for other city projects, including housing and transit.

At the centre of the agreement is Ontario Place, publicly owned land on Toronto's lakeshore, which has run down over the years and is the centre of much controversy over its future. Ford wants to include a private indoor waterpark, spa and large parking garage built and run by an Austrian corporation. Despite Chow's campaign promise to oppose the Ontario Place plans, as part of the agreement Toronto has now "accepted" that the province will control the planning of the Ontario Place.

Housing

Housing sales in Ontario are at the lowest in over 20 years. This, in turn, has caused a slowdown in new home construction. When capitalists don't have an incentive to produce, they will sit back and watch the situation get worse. The Ford government promised 1.5 million new homes in Ontario over 10 years but, at the current pace, it will fall embarrassingly short. The Ford and Trudeau governments would rather point fingers at each other as to whose fault it really is.

The Housing Corporation of Simcoe offers affordable housing units through a program, which is on track to build 682 government owned, operated, and geared-to-income units in a six-year span. Ontario and Canada need many such programs to ensure safe and affordable housing for all Canadians.

Life would be much better if affordable housing like this was widely available. It will take a socialist struggle to win this. ★



Simcoe county public housing success should be replicated

Alberta: Smith's Posturing Prowess

Derek Haines

The United Conservative Party (UCP) has accomplished little, apart from taking a cheap shot at teenage trans kids, since Danielle Smith became Premier in October 2022. She promised drastic changes in Alberta: to take on Trudeau in Ottawa, and to fix Alberta's economic woes.

There's been plenty of posturing against Ottawa, but that's not going to end inflation or the health crisis. Despite the rhetoric, the UCP serves the same big-business interests as the federal Liberals. Smith was a registered oil industry and big-business lobbyist before taking office and has a long history of advocating for private health care and private education. Right populist posturing might win votes for a while, but it doesn't pay the bills. It appears strong because there is no bold campaigning alternative, which could lead a mass struggle of working people against the UCP and the federal Liberals who are slowly drowning in the waters of the affordability crisis.

Alberta isn't the only province to bristle against the federal government; questions about provincial-federal relations have been a subject of sharp discussion over the years. Provincial sovereignty regularly pops up in some form, but it was given a new impetus by ascendant right-populism throughout the country, ever since the so-called "Freedom Convoy." Trudeau and the Liberals have declined sharply in popularity because of the soaring cost of living, offering only empty gestures, and they are hemmed in by a slavish devotion to market tinkering and capitalist ideology.

Recently, Smith launched an attack on lifesaving, gender-affirming care for trans and intersex kids, with complete disregard for modern medical science. This is another attack on health care and is symptomatic of the far right's anti-trans hysteria.

Most of Smith's big ideas fall flat, either because they are unpopular or absurd. The UCP is having second thoughts about switching to an Alberta Pension Plan. It's unpopular, with only 22 percent of Albertans supporting the gambit. Support has dropped among UCP supporters, even after the UCP spent \$7.5 million on a PR campaign trying to sell the horrible idea. It was rejected just a few years ago, when Jason Kenney talked about it. Likewise, Smith had to reconsider the limits of her signature *Alberta Sovereignty Act* shortly after taking office. Despite Smith's ideology, her government had to take all the medical lab services back into public ownership after privatization to DynaLIFE led to long wait times for routine tests.

Attacking Health Care

Unfortunately, Smith has succeeded in one important area: splitting Alberta Health Services into several smaller fragments. The government also centralized decision-making power in the hands of the Health Minister, the Mental Health and Addictions Minister, and by extension, Danielle Smith.

Alberta's ongoing health-care crisis, largely caused by the UCP since they took power in 2019, has meant a shortage of family doctors and emergency services. Their mismanagement of the COVID pandemic brought the health-care system to a breaking point from which it has not recovered. According to the Alberta Medical Association, 60 percent of family doctors are considering leaving the province or retiring early. Surprising no one, Smith has announced an expansion of private pharmacy clinics as a quick fix to the problem. A wonderful opportunity for Shopper's Drug Mart, Loblaws et al., but a band-aid on a bullet wound, as pharmacists can't replace physicians. Comprehensive lifelong care will take a back seat to corporate pill-pushing in the hands of Canada's price-gouging grocery cartel.

Following the right-populist wing of the UCP taking over the constituency associations to eject Jason Kenney, the party's governing board is now dominated by the far-right organization Take Back Alberta. However, Elections Alberta is investigating Take Back Alberta for illegal third-party advertising, which seems to have momentarily slowed their activities.

Recently, Danielle Smith rubbed shoulders with Tucker Carlson and Jordan Peterson, those reprobate ideologues, and encouraged Carlson to target Canada's already feeble environmental regulations. The undeservedly triumphant right-populism of the UCP was on full display but has nothing substantial to offer. A powerful working-class movement is needed to challenge it. ★



Protests against Smith's attacks on trans and intersex kids' care

Canada on Strike

Martin LeBrun and Chris Fofonoff

Strikes in Canada hit an 18-year high with the bosses losing over 2.3 million days in strikes in the first 10 months of 2023. The massive public-sector strikes in Québec late in the year will add at least two million more days to the total. Workers have had enough of soaring food and housing costs on top of years of stagnant wages. COVID proved that they were essential, but the bosses didn't want to pay up, even though profits are up.

Workers' determination is driving this upsurge, and members have regularly rejected the first deal their unions negotiated.

Québec's Massive Strike Wave

A public-sector strike wave shook Québec. Workers said "No more" to stagnant wages, burnout, worsening public services and creeping privatization. In 2021-22, Québec lost nearly 21,000 health-care workers — they are paid 40 percent less than in Ontario!

The CAQ government insulted workers by giving National Assembly members a 30 percent raise, while offering public-sector workers just 9 percent over five years. The 560,000 workers in the Common Front (negotiating on behalf of five unions), the FAE's teachers and the FIQ nurses all demanded significant improvements to wages and conditions.

November and December were rocked by escalating Common Front and FIQ strikes, and a month-long FAE strike. Facing over half a million striking workers having strong public support, the CAQ was forced to more than double its pay offer.

The Common Front membership is now considering a tentative agreement with a 20.4 percent raise over five years. While this would be the biggest pay bump since 1979, considering inflation and falling real wages, it is not much. Health-care workers within the Common Front are rejecting the agreement. The FAE voted a bare 50.58 percent to ratify the agreement, which was 23.5 percent over five years; they remain deeply divided over class-size and composition provisions. The FIQ nurses, striking for the first time in 25 years, are without a tentative agreement as the CAQ is unwilling to improve working conditions.



Over half a million workers were on strike in Québec



Legault, stop "Grinching" our future!

Better pay and conditions can be won. Half a million workers, with solidarity from private sector unions and community activists, could force an election on the weakened government. Winning free, quality public services requires kicking out the CAQ.

Leadership Important

Other important strikes included the BC longshore workers, Ontario's education workers, federal government employees and Toronto grocery workers at Metro. Socialist Alternative stood on picket lines and amplified workers' voices through our magazine and website articles.

The working class's shift towards greater militancy and the use of strikes to rebuild the labour movement are important. But success requires a resolute leadership with strategies to win. Some strikes did not win all they could, not because of the workers' timidity, but due to conservative leadership. Unfortunately, the public-sector union leaders in BC and Ontario were less solid than those in Québec. Unifor's leaders, unlike those of the US United Auto Workers, did not lead a militant strike. They put a weak contract to the members, and just 54 percent of Ford workers voted to accept it.

The bosses and their politicians are considering declaring more workplaces "essential services," restricting the right to strike. Basing resistance on the courts is not enough. It took four years for Ontario's Superior Court to rule that Doug Ford's 2019 legislation, which capped annual public sector pay increases at one percent, is illegal. Defeating anti-union laws and winning real workplace victories will require electing a fighting leadership.

Despite strong strike actions, the conservatives are leading the polls federally and in Ontario. In Québec, the CAQ's support has plummeted, but the PQ (another right-wing nationalist party) is reaping the benefits. As the leftish QS failed to strongly support the strikes, it has not gained workers' support. Similarly, the federal NDP is not making gains.

A workers' revolution requires building militant unions that are determined to elect militant leaders, support striking workers, fight to get rid of the bosses and create a society that works for all of us! ★

The Life of a Teacher

Anonymous

Handouts: printed. Slides: primed. Lessons: ready. “Good morning, phones away please.” A 21st century greeting. Most students comply, stragglers begrudgingly surrendering their phones to my desk.

“Please get out yesterday’s worksheets and notes.” The lesson begins. Five minutes in, a hand goes up. “What are we working on? What pages?” says a student. “Did you take notes?” I ask. Blank expression. “Check your bag?” I reply. Rustling. The inside of the bag looks like a family of hamsters decided to overwinter. I make a mental note to help the student organize their materials later.

The lesson continues. Students are engaged. The hand goes up again. “I can’t find it.” Three more hands go up. Giving the students a question to consider, I rush out the door, speed-walking to the photocopy room. Pages printed, I rummage for the communal hand stapler, shared by twenty teachers. The printer hasn’t had staples for two months — the senior management tightening our belts (not theirs) again. Back to the classroom!

The lesson wraps up with thoughtful contributions from students. One down! Three more classes to go.

3:00 pm! Work’s done. As if! That’s the end of the paid day, but communicating with parents, lesson replanning, marking, etc. awaits.

5:57 pm. Why am I still at work? Good thing it’s not report card season, or I’d be working a week of 12-hour days. I briefly daydream about July when I’ll have time for myself but will also be laid off without pay for two months.

I get home. Exhausted. But at least I got to express some creativity and personality on the job. I glance at my students’ holiday thank-you cards on the mantelpiece and smile to myself. ★



What Makes Me Angry: Whose Rules?

Larry Hyink

Anatole France, noting the illusion of equality before capitalist law, declared, “the law in all its majesty, forbids both rich and poor to sleep under the bridges of Paris, beg in the streets and steal loaves of bread.”

Justin Trudeau loves babbling piously about his support for the so-called “international rules-based order.” Sure he does. After all, Canada wouldn’t exist without a previous version of the international rules-based order: the Doctrine of Discovery, which gave “legal” cover for grabbing most of the planet by European colonialism. For several hundred years, the same rules-based order supported the brutal slave trade and chattel slavery simply for the money it made its privileged investors.

The “rules-based order” has changed over the years, especially after the second world war and the colonial rebellions that finally put the last nails in the coffin of classic European colonial rule.

What that hasn’t changed is that those who give the orders, the 1% and their hired political stooges, are the ones that make, and enforce, these “rules.” People not serving the interests of the 1%, who violate the rules, are subject to punishing sanctions, arrest and pious denunciation. Take Venezuela. Despite the pressure from sanctions and faithful bootlickers like Justin Trudeau recognizing “interim president” Juan Guaido (remember him?) instead of the elected Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela held out until the US changed its, and, coincidentally, Justin’s mind.

In contrast, for servants and allies of the 1%, these rules are at best guidelines rather than actual rules. Thus, the massacre of 1,200 people when Hamas attacked Israel is a violation of the current rules, and any set of rules a decent person would imagine. But the Israeli massacre of 30,000 people (and counting) is “self-defence,” calling not for sanctions but for more support to ramp up the slaughter. If you’re the leader of an imperialist country, like Justin, you gotta love those kinds of rules.

If there are international rules, they should be determined by the people of the world and not by the small handful of the world’s owners. This means genuine democratic socialism, not the failed Stalinist travesties of Russia and China. As Karl Marx stated, we have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a world to win! ★

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Ray Goerke

There is intense horror and anger around the world at the Israeli regime's brutal assault on the people of Gaza. After five bloody months of bombing, 30,000 people have been officially killed – mostly women and children. This is an underestimate, as many more bodies are buried under the rubble of destroyed buildings. Over 90 percent of Gaza's population has been displaced from their homes. The Israeli military has bombed and invaded hospitals, cut off power, and restricted medical supplies. Surgeries are being performed without anaesthesia or even pain killers.

Diseases are ravaging people made vulnerable by stress, overcrowding, and poor sanitation. Starvation and dehydration are rampant, as the Israeli regime has restricted supplies of food and water. Famine is now "inevitable," according to the UN, after the unconscionable defunding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). Canada followed the US in cutting funds to UNRWA, citing Israeli claims that a dozen staff participated in the October 7 attacks (UNRWA has a staff of 30,000).

The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) told civilians to move to southern Gaza for safety. Just days after the UN's International Court of Justice ordered Israel to take steps to prevent a genocide and to ensure humanitarian aid to Gaza, the IDF began bombing Rafah. There are 1.5 million people in Rafah, including over a million refugees, most living in flimsy tents with very little food or water. Its population density is five times higher than the city of Toronto.

The despicable attacks on Rafah utterly expose the lie of the so-called "war on Hamas." The Israeli regime is inflicting collective punishment on the innocent people of Gaza, murderously driving to depopulate Gaza and destroy its society.

Wider War a Significant Threat

The killing and fighting have spread far beyond Gaza. Violence and repression have escalated in the West Bank with the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and right-wing settlers having killed over 500 Palestinians and detained 7,000. It is a tinderbox.

The Israeli military and Hezbollah in Lebanon regularly fire missiles at each other. Israeli forces escalated tensions by assassinating Hamas and Hezbollah leaders in Lebanon.

Conflicts are spreading across the region. It has suffered over a century of imperialist actions in dividing people and creating artificial states, plots and coups, wars and bombing. In Syria, Iraq and Yemen, the US, Israel and Britain are bombing forces aligned with Iran that have attacked imperialism's interests. Turkey and Iran have also fired missiles and bombs.

US imperialism is locked in a contradiction that it cannot escape. It cannot allow Israel, its long-time proxy in the Middle East, to become weakened, yet it does not want a

Solidarity



wider regional war to explode. This could tip the world into a deep recession and would risk military overstretch as it is already embroiled in a "proxy war" with Russia in Ukraine and is trying to contain China in the Pacific.

Biden publicly urges the Israeli regime to show restraint, yet gives unwavering support to Israel, including providing an additional \$14 billion of military aid after the bombing of Rafah had begun.

US imperialism's major rivals, China and Russia, have positioned themselves as sympathetic to the Palestinian people, but this is purely cynical, as there is no concrete action. They are using the US support for Israel to make economic and political gains at the US's expense. China is Israel's second-largest trading partner. While the Arab governments criticize Israel, they too have done nothing to help the people of Gaza.

All the major imperialist powers want to avoid being sucked into an expanding conflict in the Middle East, but the situation risks spiralling out of their logic and control. The Palestinians have suffered and continue to suffer a catastrophe. A conflict across the region would expand the death and destruction. It could escalate into an inter-imperialist war.

How Can Peace and Liberation Be Won?

The Palestinian people face a genocide if the Israeli war machine is not stopped. Around the world millions are asking how to stop the killing. Palestinians cannot rely on any imperialist powers, nor on the Arab regimes, who have all failed to stop the Israeli assault on Gaza, the land seizures in the West Bank, and the decades-long occupation.

Any solution by the imperialist powers would defend their economic interests and would, at best, resemble the failed capitalist "two-state solution" of the Oslo Accords, which did not satisfy the desires for peace and national independence of the Palestinian people.

Mass action and class struggle against Israeli capitalism are needed, including an appeal for international working-class solidarity. Relief of the desperate conditions in Gaza

with Gaza



could come from a mass anti-war movement in Israel against the government and military, backed by an international working-class anti-war movement.

Today, most of the Israeli working class support the Israeli military because they see no alternative. But Israeli society is deeply divided and Netanyahu's government, the most right-wing in Israel's history, is extremely unpopular.

Before October 7, there were huge demonstrations against the government's attack on democratic rights. Netanyahu is rightly blamed for helping to promote Hamas, whose reactionary politics and tactics feed Israeli working class's fears, and push them towards the Zionist right wing. Netanyahu ignored warnings of Hamas's planned attack. He refuses to negotiate the hostages' return.

Despite the situation today, the Israeli working class is the only force with the power to overthrow the Israeli state. The Israeli working class is not monolithic: 20 percent of the population is Israeli Arab, and they have a crucial role in sectors of the economy. Israeli construction has come to a nearly complete halt, as it relied on Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli Arabs in 2021 made up 40 percent of Israeli health workers.

To succeed, the Palestine solidarity movement must seek to drive a wedge between Israel's working class and capitalist class, to widen the movement into a mass struggle for a socialist Palestinian state and for socialist change in Israel. This is what Socialist Struggle Movement, our sister organization in Israel and Palestine, is striving for under very difficult circumstances.



US health workers in solidarity with Gaza

These revolutionary activists are fighting for a democratic, socialist state of Palestine alongside a democratic, socialist Israel, with two capitals in Jerusalem and full equality for minorities, as part of a socialist confederation in the Middle East.

What Can the Canadian Working Class Do?

Canada's ruling class was shocked by the huge outpouring of solidarity with the people of Gaza. Their initial strategy of labelling the rallies as "pro-Hamas" and "antisemitic" failed. The Liberal government was compelled to declare support for a ceasefire, something it would never have done without pressure from this movement.

Over the last decade, Canada has exported more than \$140 million in military supplies to Israel, and this continues today. It is totally contradictory for Canada to be a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty and to call for a ceasefire while continuing weapons' exports. The solidarity movement cannot look to Canada's bosses for support. It is the working class and the labour movement that are crucial to this struggle: they can stop the flow of profit for the ruling class, which is ultimately the only language they will listen to.

In October, a coalition of 19 Palestinian trade unions made an international appeal for workers to refuse to build and transport weapons destined for Israel. This call was taken up by dock workers' unions in Catalonia, Italy and Belgium. There is potential to broaden and deepen this kind of action, including in Canadian unions. Organizations like Labour 4 Palestine can play a critical role.

In November and December, Ceasefire Now rallies were called across Canada. The labour movement should build for a mass action conference with demands to end Canadian military aid and sales to Israel, for Canada to immediately re-fund UNRWA (six Canadian unions demand this), and for a ceasefire now. A conference could elect a coordinating committee to organize actions, including strikes and targeted boycotts, and defend workers and students facing reprisals from employers, universities and the government. Labour 4 Palestine has already set up a defence fund and legal support.

It will take initiatives from rank-and-file union members to make this happen. The first step is often for an individual or small group to put forward a resolution in their union to support key demands. Youth have provided political leadership by organizing many of the public rallies and student walkouts. The next steps for the movement should be to draw in the wider workers' movement, and to organize within the unions for escalating and coordinated action.

Solidarity with Gaza means opposing the blood-soaked capitalist system that creates this horror. International Socialist Alternative is fighting for international working-class solidarity in the struggle for peace, liberation, and socialism. ★

For more on Israel-Palestine: <https://socialism.org.il/>

Carbon Tax: Not an Answer

Tim Heffernan



Fossil fuel production drives climate change

“**A**xe the (carbon) tax,” argues Pierre Poilievre. Given the source, one could be tempted to automatically respond, “keep the tax.” But contrary to Poilievre’s claims, the carbon tax is not the main reason for the increased price of heating oil and gas. The real drivers are war, and profiteering oil and gas corporations.

A carbon tax sets a price on carbon by charging an amount for the greenhouse gas emissions with the aim that charging more will reduce their production. It is not unique to Canada and was first introduced in Alberta in 2007. It is considered as revenue-neutral, as the tax’s revenue is returned to taxpayers.

While even some Liberals are critical of oil companies, they do nothing. Catherine MacKenna, former Liberal environment minister, stated that they “are generating massive profits that they return to their shareholders while charging consumers exorbitant prices. At the same time, they are demanding huge public subsidies to clean up the pollution they cause, while walking away from their already modest climate commitments.”

Conservatives Attack the "Liberal" Carbon Tax

Poilievre uses the carbon tax to attack Trudeau, pretending to defend working families facing inflation. Yet, the Conservatives in the 2008 and 2021 federal election campaigns featured carbon-pricing proposals — although the Liberals implemented the national carbon tax in 2019. Calling a policy that claims to be a climate solution a tax plays into the hands of right-wing populism and climate sceptics. As Exxon Mobil supports the tax there must be questions about its actual impact.

In October 2023, Trudeau undermined the tax by exempting home heating oil. Although this applies across the country, it happens to provide maximum relief in Atlantic Canada where the Liberals are worried about losing

seats. Others are also unequally hard hit by the tax, such as farmers who use fossil fuels to dry grain and people in the north and on reserves without access to gas for heating. The Liberals' shift on heating oil was a gift to Poilievre, enabling him to criticize Trudeau for making policy on opportunist political grounds rather than for environmental reasons. *The Globe and Mail* noted “while the carbon tax lives on for now, it has been neutered, since no one can count on the certainty of the tax steadily rising.” The Conservatives will continue to frame the tax as a burden on Canadians.

A Lose-Lose: Bad Politics and Ineffective Policy

Although the tax does not financially penalize most people, the public perception is largely negative. Opposition will grow as it increases to \$130 per ton by 2030, from the current rate of \$65 per ton. Polling found 42 percent of Canadians want the carbon price eliminated altogether. On the other hand, it also found a majority want the federal government to do more to fight climate change, and 30 percent of Canadians across income brackets say they are willing to pay more income tax for this purpose.

The biggest problem with the carbon tax is that it is ineffective. Roughly half of all Canada’s greenhouse gas releases come from electricity generation, the fossil fuel sector and manufacture — things consumers have no control over. The biggest increase in recent years is from the fossil fuel sector. The biggest drop has been electricity generation. *Briarpatch* reported that “in 2003, the Ontario government committed to phasing out its use of coal-fired power plants to generate electricity. They didn’t bother with ‘market-based solutions,’ but just regulated coal out of existence.” This slashed greenhouse gas emissions from electricity production by 87 percent between 2005 and 2015. The carbon tax has no impact on these trends — what is needed is state intervention as happened in Ontario.

The carbon tax also does not provide good jobs for workers in sectors that will be phased out. This requires planning. The fight against Big Oil is a bigger challenge than Ontario’s action on coal. Canadians cannot wait for benevolent governments to do the job. The urgency is to build a powerful mass movement that will force governments to close down the polluters and shift to clean energy. ★



What the oil industry does to the land

International Working Women's Day is a Day of Struggle

Allie Pev and Leslie Kemp

March 8 has become a day where liberal feminists acknowledge women's progress over the past few decades. They gather at celebratory breakfasts or dinners to acknowledge the achievements of women who have pushed past boundaries (legal, professional or social) and made significant differences in their communities. But for most ordinary women, this day goes unnoticed. They work long hours at their paid job and then go home to perform the reproductive labour of childcare, domestic work and cooking. For many women, especially immigrants, their workday involves juggling more than one full- or part-time job to make ends meet. For women globally, it may mean escaping violence in their homes, or the violence of war. For many, the burden of gender inequality is the norm of being a woman.

This does not mean that women are complacent. Growing global struggles for women's reproductive rights, for gender equality and against misogynist violence are a testament to the determination of women not to accept the status quo. Young women and girls know that aspiring for gender equality means a struggle against the system.

From the beginning, International Women's Day (IWD) was a *Working Women's Day*. The aspiration of the 100 women from 17 different countries, who voted at the International Conference of Socialist Women in 1910 to proclaim IWD as a day to be celebrated annually, was the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of socialism. They saw this as a socialist day of struggle, taking up the pressing demands of working women, to abolish both the wage slavery of workers and the domestic slavery of women. In 1912, 20,000 immigrant textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts struck for better pay and conditions in the Bread and Roses Strike. Five years later, St Petersburg's female textile workers walked out on strike, beginning the tremendous revolutionary movement that overthrew the Tsar and led to the Russian Revolution. They clearly saw, as Clara Zetkin said, that "Bourgeois feminism and the movement of proletarian women are two fundamentally different social movements."

Still Fighting for Equality

Our wins should be celebrated but there is a long road ahead. While the vast majority of Canadian women between 25- and 54-years old work, with an 85.1 percent



The Bread and Roses Strike, Massachusetts 1912

participation rate and 81.6 percent employed (November 2022), on average women earn 11.1 percent less per hour than men. The wage gap increases for racialized and Indigenous women who earn 59 cents and 58 cents, respectively, for every \$1 a white man earns. Even worse, Black, Indigenous and women of colour were most likely to be laid off during COVID, as they tend to have part-time, precarious and front-line work. Trans PULSE Canada found in 2019 that 34 percent of trans women had been dismissed, fired or not hired because of who they are. In the last five years, 67 percent say they've dealt with verbal harassment and 40 percent have experienced sexual harassment.

This paints a devastating picture and will persist if we do not take full advantage of the possibilities of IWD. This day should not be dominated by deceitful calls for equality and progress from the same female bosses who exploit other women's labour in the name of entrepreneurship or individual, self-made, *girl boss* nonsense.

Capitalism creates a hierarchy, where oppression of women by women holding superior positions is part and parcel of the system. There is no other way — it's how the system functions. IWD is a call to all workers of all identities to take up the struggle for socialist feminism to fight the capitalist system that perpetuates gender discrimination and violence. It is often said that "a woman's place is in her union," which is true in Canada as women are the majority of members. Unions should take up the broader issues facing the working class and mount a struggle against sexism, racism, poverty and all forms of oppression, fighting for safety at work but also beyond the workplace, demanding a broad program for women's reproductive health, paid parental leave, universal childcare and quality public housing. ★

The "Boiling" of the US–China Conflict

Maurice Li and Bill Hopwood

The growing US–China conflict dominates global politics and economics. The rivalry is rooted in the struggle for economic power, not politicians' motives.

China began to move from a Stalinist planned economy to embrace capitalism in 1990. Over several decades, the rapid growth of China's economy helped the US and other major capitalist economies. China imported raw materials, machine tools and luxury goods. The cheap labour in factories re-located to China boosted profits and lowered the cost of commodities, which masked the stagnant living standards of workers in the "west."

However, around ten years ago things turned into their opposite as China's economy grew to rival the US and it moved to compete with the US in high-tech products. US president Obama's "pivot to Asia" in 2012 marked a switch to being rivals. Since then, tensions have mounted as the US and China are locked into a conflict that includes military hardware, technology, domination of regions of the world and control of resources.

In the last few years, the US and other western companies have relocated investment and production away from China. In 2023, Mexico overtook China as the largest source of imports into the US. Capitalism has entered a phase of deglobalization and decoupling.

Both the US and China are seeking to tie other countries into their areas of domination. China's Belt and Road initiative is pulling countries, especially in Asia, into its orbit. China, rather than the US, now dominates trade with Africa and South America.

Both countries' regimes and economies have deep-seated weaknesses, but rather than reducing the conflict, these will intensify their nationalist rivalry.

War in Ukraine and Middle East

The US used Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 to strengthen its power. Sweden and Finland joined NATO. Military links with Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and India were strengthened. Countries around the world, now including Germany and Japan, are boosting arms expenditure, usually at the cost of social and public services. The German military is preparing for a war with Russia within eight years.

The US-led alliance has poured billions of dollars of weapons into Ukraine, using the Ukrainians' genuine desire for independence to mask the "proxy" war between the US and Russia. Russia, China, Iran and North Korea



have strengthened ties among them. The war is now a bloody stalemate and Western governments are growing weary of funding Ukraine's military.

The US has staunchly supported the Israeli regime's murderous slaughter in Gaza. Russia and China exploit this, pretending to be the Palestinians' friend and presenting themselves as advocates of peace. The US is losing influence in the wider Middle East and the Global South. All these governments have no concern for the Palestinians' suffering.

South China Sea and Taiwan

The South China Sea is a region of conflict. There are escalating territorial disputes and confrontations between China and the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Brunei. Behind these regional powers stand the US. The Philippines' government recently reversed course, moving closer to the US.

China claims to have the largest navy in the world, but it is dominated by small ships as it focusses on the nearby waters. The US has a global reach with 11 aircraft carriers and 92 destroyers compared to China's 2 carriers and 50 destroyers.

Taiwan is a potentially serious flashpoint. China under Xi has asserted it will take control of the island. However, the people of Taiwan are increasingly hostile to being part of China. In the recent presidential election, the pro-American Democratic Progressive Party candidate, Lai Ching-Te, was elected. This strengthens the US position in the region.

Age of Imperialist Conflicts

As capitalist economies around the world face mounting crises, they increasingly rely on nationalism and compete with each other for markets, resources and political influence. The working class of the world can have no trust in any imperialist power — they are all predators. The "enemy of my enemy" is not necessarily the workers' friend. An important part of the workers' struggles will be against militarism and war. ★

For more on China: chinaworker.info/en

For more on the US: socialistalternative.org

Why is Right-Wing Populism on the Rise?

Simon Schweitzer

Germany was recently swept by huge rallies, the largest movement in decades, with one-and-a-half million people taking to the streets in over 90 cities and towns. They were protesting the far-right AFD's (Alternative for Germany) plans to deport all immigrants including children of immigrants and naturalized German citizens.

Yet, in spite of this massive protest, the AFD is the second most popular party in Germany and is expected to win big in the Federal and State elections later this year. The establishment parties are trying to position themselves at the head of this protest movement as "defenders of democracy," but they represent and continue to defend the status quo that is widely rejected even by the anti-AFD protestors. Meanwhile Die Linke, the coalition party of the left, is falling apart over internal disagreements. To many people who are stressed and angry, the AFD seems to be the sole voice of opposition to the status quo.

Worldwide Trend of Polarization

The situation in Germany is part of a worldwide trend of polarization. Right-wing populists are doing well electorally despite widespread opposition to their reactionary ideas. In this era of inflation, crisis, and war, the establishment and traditional left parties have failed to put forward a credible alternative that speaks to the anger and frustration of working-class people. Right populism capitalizes on this by blaming scapegoats like immigrants, women, and Indigenous people. The boorish, disrespectful behaviour of right-populist leaders like Trump or Javier Milei in Argentina increases their credibility to parts of the population that distrusts anyone associated with the establishment.

In Argentina, Milei won a landslide in the election, but his policies have faced strong resistance. Milei ran on a "libertarian" economic platform, promising to privatize state-run companies, gut labour laws, and move Argentina

from the peso to the American dollar. His attacks on labour are stalled in the courts, and a large bill of many cuts faces huge nationwide protests and strikes. Many Argentinians are strongly opposed to Milei but his opponent in the election, Sergio Massa, a centrist incumbent, oversaw a devastating economic crisis, with 40 percent in poverty and inflation above 200 percent. He only promised more of the same.

In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders, a right-wing nationalist, led his party to a resounding victory in last year's elections. Wilders ran mainly on anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric. Yet polls show that a majority in the Netherlands support progressive policies like a wealth tax and raising the minimum wage. Again, the lack of any credible left alternative meant that Wilders was alone in criticizing the hated political establishment, handing his party the most seats in parliament.

In the US, Biden beat Trump in 2020 but then went on to oversee the highest inflation in decades, break the rail workers' strike, and he continues to defend and support Israel as it carries out the most horrific massacre of the century. Now Trump is poised again to win the presidency this year. Trump's popularity does not signal a shift to the right for most Americans, who support medicare for all, the right to abortion, a ceasefire in Gaza, and unions. Yet "The Squad," the popular progressives in Congress, have not fought for these issues, have been unwilling to criticize the Democratic Party, and have mostly ran cover for Biden's unpopular actions.

Weakness of the Left

If the parties of the mainstream left continue to defend the establishment and the status quo, right populist formations will continue to grow, because the status quo is not acceptable for working-class people. Bold socialist demands would speak to the anger and frustration of people and cut across the growth of the right. Key tasks for the working class are to rebuild its organizational strength, and to have a position from which to wage campaigns and win meaningful political victories. We are seeing the beginnings of this process in a reinvigorating militant labour movement in North America and Europe. Organization and political boldness on the left are needed to counter the far right and to represent a step forward for humanity. ★



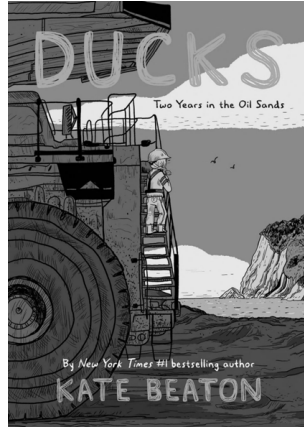
Massive rallies took place across Germany against the far right. Placard translates to: "People's rights, not right people!"

Review

Ducks by Kate Beaton

Reviewed by Bill Hopwood

Ducks is Kate Beaton's graphic autobiography of leaving home, Mabou Cape Breton, aged 21, to work for two years in the Oil Sands. Like many before, she left Atlantic Canada because the jobs have gone — the fish, the coal, the steel — all gone. She goes to pay off the burden of student debt. She can either have opportunity or home.



Her simple drawings and dialogue rarely shout but pack a powerful narrative. The scale of the machinery and mines are presented as is the devastation of the land. She also shows the region's beauty — the northern lights and wildlife. The title is for the hundreds of ducks poisoned by the tailing ponds' toxic water.

The core of *Ducks* is the people, their strengths and weaknesses, kindnesses and stresses. Alongside friendship, there is misogyny, drug addiction, boredom, alienation and loneliness.

Beaton lives in the camps rather than in Fort McMurray, hard-work places, with 12-hour shifts on freezing winter nights. Pollution everywhere. Filled with people only there for the money. Men dominate the camps, often 50 men to 1 woman. Many have left their children and families for a lonely life chasing the money. Marriages collapse under the stress.

Beaton is constantly sexually harassed and raped twice. She wrote in her Afterword of her major trauma. And adds: "I guarantee that neither of the men who raped me consider what they did as rape ... I was ... a short release from the boredom and loneliness." Other women co-workers share her experience of trauma and self-blame.

She recognizes her ignorance of Indigenous rights or experiences. She quotes Cree elder, Celina Harpe, on the Oil Sands' impact downstream on Indigenous people — the pollution and cancers, all because "their almighty dollar comes first."

In the background is the companies' bullshit talk about safety but not acting, and hypocrisy about environment and mental health.

Her drawings, from her experience, powerfully present the Oil Sands' and capitalism's damage to people and nature. ★

Our Land: The Birth of Nunavut

Leslie Kemp



Nunavut was born out of struggle. In the late 1960s, a time of many mass movements, educated and politically active young Inuit questioned the position of Inuit in their own land. They were losing their culture and language. Extractive industries hired Inuit as inexpensive local labour. Inuit had no say on decisions over land, resources, education, and health care. The 1969 White Paper, which proposed to eliminate Indian Status, triggered concern. Organizer Tagak Curley said, "We had to stand up and organize our people so we could be heard." The first small snowball was the formation of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITA) in 1971, since renamed the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, meaning *Inuit are united in Canada*.

Today, Nunavut (meaning *Our Land*), comprises one fifth of Canada's land mass, a territory larger than England, France, Germany, and Spain combined. Inuit leaders, with determination, patience, and skillful organizing, carefully navigated towards self-determination: having control of their land with Inuktitut as their language. They spoke to people across Canada in many forums, arguing that the survival of their people and way of life requires protecting their land. To Inuit, land was their heritage, not a commodity to be sold.

ITA organized a referendum, with a 90 to 100 percent turnout in all communities, and received massive support for the creation of Nunavut. In 1993, the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement was signed, the largest land-claim settlement in Canadian history. Older people wondered, "This is our birthplace: why do we have to claim it from someone else?"

On April 1, 1999, Nunavut became a separate territory with its own government. Now, 25 years later, Nunavut has signed an agreement to transfer responsibility for land and water management from the federal government. Canada's claim of northern sovereignty has inflicted many wounds upon the Inuit; in the past and up until today, Nunavut has had Canada's highest rates of child poverty, food insecurity and inadequate housing. As Inuk Aaju Peter says, sovereignty is not an "imposed system from the outside," but is "sharing your food" and "welcoming everyone here." ★

For Housing Policies that Work

Uros Novakovic

Imagine good housing guaranteed for all. Stable rent at rates that cover only maintenance and utilities. The right to inherit tenure from one's parents. Where everyone has a sense of ownership and an ability to design one's dwelling, not just those who can afford it. Parks and gardens, schools, and places for all kinds of recreation are close by. Buildings are designed to complement nature and ecology. There is democratic management of society that starts at the scale of buildings and neighbourhoods, and extends to cities, countries, and, eventually, all of humanity.

Public housing programs, such as Canada's Wartime Housing Limited, and municipal housing projects in social-democratic Europe, achieved much of this in the past. Future public housing programs will be able to achieve all of it. The obstacle to achieving this today is not the supposed technical difficulty of building sufficient housing for a rapidly growing population, but rather the unwillingness of the ruling class to do so.

Canada's ruling class, historically and today, subsidizes private development and private property ownership and seeks to maintain the working class as a stable source of profitable rent. It sabotages any meaningful efforts to build public housing in adequate quality and quantity. All the major political parties put forward fraudulent "housing programs" that they know will have no impact.

Today, the Canadian working class faces many of the same conditions it has faced historically. Workers have no choice but to spend most of their income on rent, live in



High quality publicly owned housing. Photo: Peter Barber Architects

overcrowded housing, and delay or abandon their dreams of starting a family. Lack of affordable housing diminishes working people's lives. Canadian workers have, for the most part, correctly assessed that no solution to the housing crisis will come from the ruling class. The only policies that today's rulers consider feasible are those that don't fundamentally challenge private ownership and private development of real estate, such as limiting immigration, relaxing zoning regulations, changing the building code, and providing limited rent control. All these supposed remedies are known to have at best marginal effects.

A massive publicly funded, and worker controlled, housing program is necessary for working-class life, but it is also anathema to the interests of the ruling class. Big business will resist at every stage the struggle for adequate housing. Winning will require class solidarity, diligent organization, and struggle. The only way to guarantee good housing for all in the long term is to have a society run by, and in the interests of, the working class. ★

Health Emergency *(continued from back page)*

care accounted for 43 percent of all COVID deaths in Canada. The lack of beds in long-term care also ricochets through the system; beds in hospitals are tied up with elderly patients who have nowhere else to go. This, in turn, affects the long waits in emergency care, affected by a shortage both of beds and staff.

The toxic drug crisis is a public health emergency, yet action is woefully inadequate. Between January 2016 and September 2022, there were more than 34,400 apparent opioid toxicity deaths in Canada.

Privatization No Answer

There are growing calls and moves to privatize health care. However, the deaths due to COVID in long-term care show that profits come at the cost of health and even of lives. Privatization destroys equitable access and steals workers from

the public sector. The BC Supreme Court and Appeal Court found that "duplicative private health care would not reduce wait times in the public system, and instead make them worse... a private pay system would undermine equitable access to care by essentially allowing people who have the ability to pay to cut to the front of the line, not actually fix the line."

The vision of the 1960s — a fully funded, comprehensive and public health system — needs to be upheld. A revolution in health care is needed. This includes preventative care that recognizes the social determinants of health. This would put human needs before profit, tax the rich to provide the funds for quality health care, take all profiteering out of health, and recognize that the best health outcomes are achieved by ensuring that no one lives in poverty, and everyone has a home. ★

HEALTH EMERGENCY



Leslie Kemp

Canada's health-care system faces its deepest crisis since "universal" health care was introduced in 1966. It is buckling under multiple simultaneous crises: severe doctor and nurse shortages, long emergency wait times, a backlog to see specialists and get operations, escalating toxic drug deaths, inadequate and insufficient long-term care, a fragmented dental care program and lack of a national pharmacare program. The COVID pandemic sharply revealed the system's vulnerabilities, which continue to plague the delivery of timely health-care services. However, this crisis has been brewing for decades.

Compromise Between Public and Private Provision

Public health care was won after a bitter struggle between Saskatchewan's CCF government and much of the public against a section of doctors and big business. Universal health care fundamentally changed people's lives. It meant not having to choose between seeing a doctor or feeding your family; being hospitalized wasn't going to put your family into debt.

The seeds of today's crisis were sown in the compromise between private and public provision of health care. While family doctor visits fall under the umbrella of the public health system, most doctors are paid on a fee-for-service basis and work as independent contractors, not as public employees.

Québec nurses: "Our working conditions are your care conditions"

The burden of administrative work and costs get in the way of quality patient-doctor relationships, which causes many doctors to choose to work in hospitals or as specialists. Six and a half million people in Canada do not have a family doctor.

During COVID, health-care workers laboured long hours, leading to burnout and early retirements. Before COVID, the nurse shortages were forecast to reach 117,000 by 2030.

"Universal" health care was never that: dental care or prescription drugs were not part of the package. Two years ago, the NDP agreed to support the Liberal government; in return the Liberals promised national dental care and pharmacare programs. The dental program is being rolled out but has serious weaknesses, with huge gaps in eligibility and a reliance on the private sector. The pharmacare program's new deadline is March 1 but seems unlikely to happen.

The pandemic exposed the weakness of long-term care, operated by a mix of for-profit, non-profit and government agencies. Decades of neglect, particularly by profit-gouging businesses, and lack of funding, resulted in widespread low pay and unsafe working conditions. A December 2021 report said that residents of long-term

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